

The background of the cover is a photograph of a rescue operation. A firefighter in a red suit and helmet is on a rocky ledge, holding a rope. Below him, a person in a blue suit is being lowered in a basket. Another firefighter in a red suit is on the right, also holding the rope. In the background, a river flows through a valley with a road and some buildings.

*AVON FIRE & RESCUE*

# Magazine

Summer 2008

For employees of Avon Fire & Rescue Service

**Drill Squad turns 21**

# Welcome



## From the Chief

Welcome to the summer edition of AF&RS Magazine.

Another quarter has passed bringing with it the introduction of new equipment, community safety campaigns and celebrations.

In March we became the first fire and rescue service in the country to own a hovercraft, which was unveiled to councillors, local dignitaries and other coastal rescue organisations during a launch event at Weston-super-Mare Fire Station. You can read more about the hovercraft and its capabilities on page 18.

April saw the launch of the first of five safety campaigns due to run during the next 12 months. Page six has details of how stations and staff from Community Safety worked together to promote cooking safety and arson awareness.

And this year our Drill Squad celebrated its 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary – pages 20 and 21 take a look back at the history of the group and the valuable contribution its members have made over the years to service life.

I hope you enjoy the read – contributions are, as always, welcome!

**Kevin Pearson**  
Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive



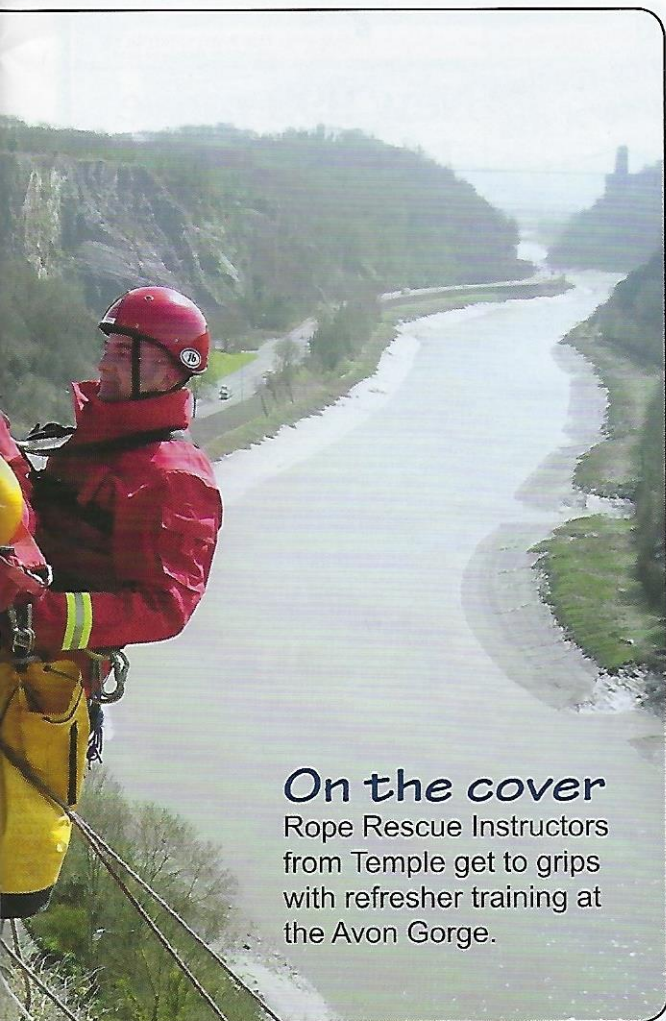
## Welcome

**W**e welcome your comments on the magazine – if you have something to say or have an idea for stories, get in touch!

**Y**ou can reach the magazine team by calling 0117 926 2061 extension 217, email [pressoffice@avonfire.gov.uk](mailto:pressoffice@avonfire.gov.uk) or by writing to Media & Communication Team, Avon Fire & Rescue Service, Temple Back, Bristol, BS1 6EU.



We've gone green! This magazine has been printed using vegetable-based inks on recycled paper.



## On the cover

Rope Rescue Instructors from Temple get to grips with refresher training at the Avon Gorge.

## Features

**Our people** – Who's heading off to the World Firefighter Games?

9

**Looking back** – Interesting articles from magazines over the years. Can you spot anyone you know?

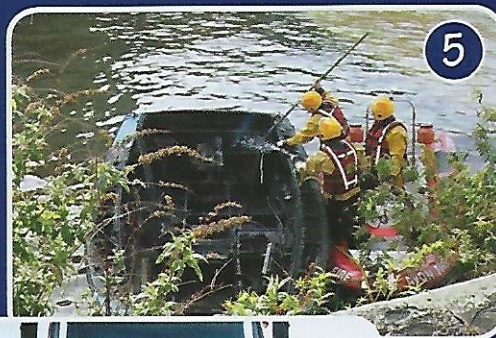
12

**Partnership working** – Crews carry out tricky rescues in separate exercises with Bristol and Wessex Water.

17

**Focus on** – The Drill Squad turns 21.

20



5



13

## Regulars

**Incidents** – A round up of shouts since March.

5

**Charity times** – Who's been getting into the charitable spirit?

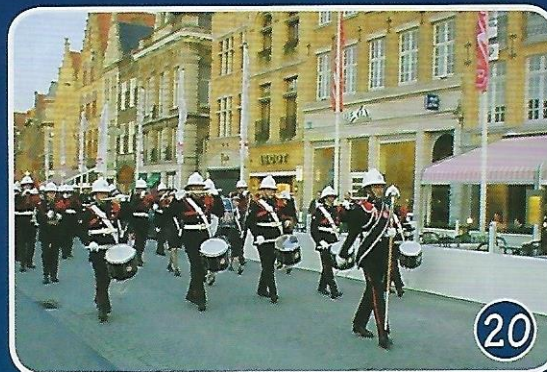
13

**Sporting Avon** – News on volleyball and football.

23

**Lifestyle** – Did you miss out on Cake Time treats? Recreate your favourite with our recipe special!

24



20

# Round-up



## In the news - what's hit the headlines over the last few months?

Stories about incidents, new appliances and our community safety work continue to be of interest to both our local and trade media.

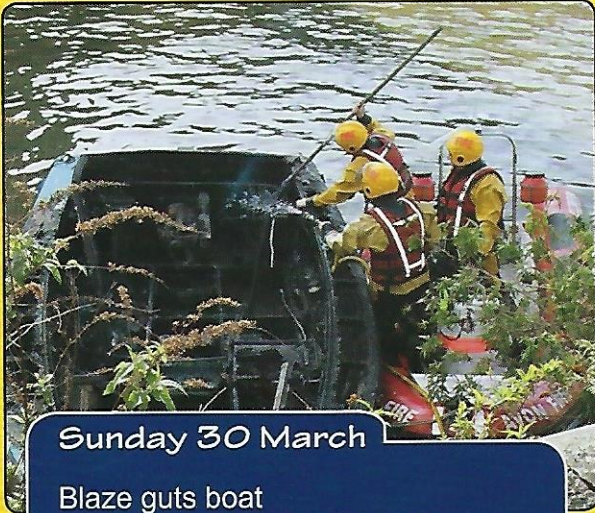
The service's hovercraft, the first to be owned by a fire and rescue service in the UK, was launched in **March**; we announced that the number of unnecessary call outs to automatic fire alarms had been cut by over 50 percent thanks to the efforts of the Unwanted Fire Signals Team, and; six firefighters from Bedminster took part in the Sport Relief three mile run the hard way, by donning breathing apparatus and fire kit.

The benefits of our Home Fire Safety Visits and smoke alarms were proved in **April** when a family from Bath were alerted to a small fire in their dishwasher at night – after hearing the smoke alarm we fitted activate, the family shut the door on the fire, left their home and dialled 999, and as a result of their actions the fire was contained to the kitchen; we signed an agreement with student accommodation provider UNITE to improve fire safety arrangements in existing and future properties, and; fire crews worked quickly to ensure a well developed house fire in Long Ashton did not spread to neighbouring homes.

In **May**, a bus driver was recognised for his actions in rescuing a couple from their burning home in Midsomer Norton; Training School began for 25 new recruits who were the successful candidates from January's recruitment campaign; and our new trauma packs were put to good use by Red Watch Kingswood when a man suffered burns to his body after he attempted to light his barbecue using flammable liquid.

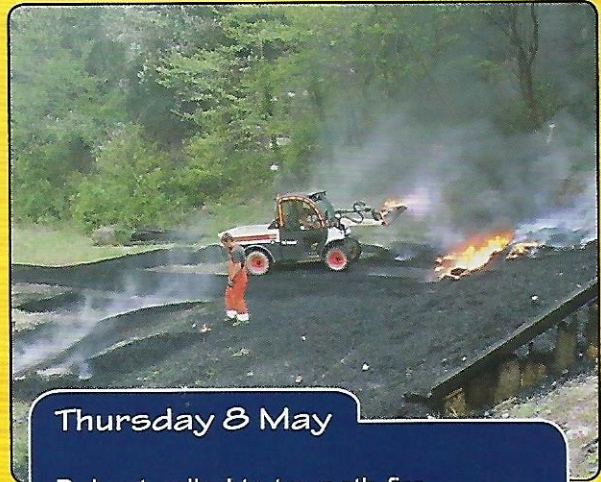
Bath's safety boat was tasked with rescuing a Shetland Pony which had fallen down a steep river bank and was trapped in the waters of the River Avon in **June**; the hovercraft made its first rescue on the mudflats at Weston-super-Mare before the vessel had even gone on the run and; the Sparks package was delivered to the 1,000th primary school youngster in North Somerset since the start of the school year.





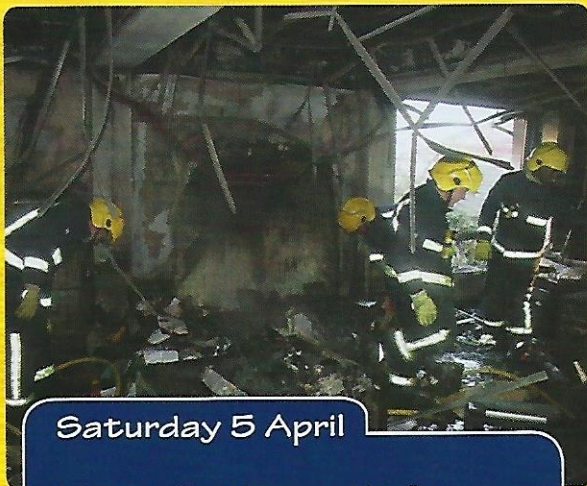
**Sunday 30 March**

Blaze guts boat  
16.14 Avon Street, St Philips



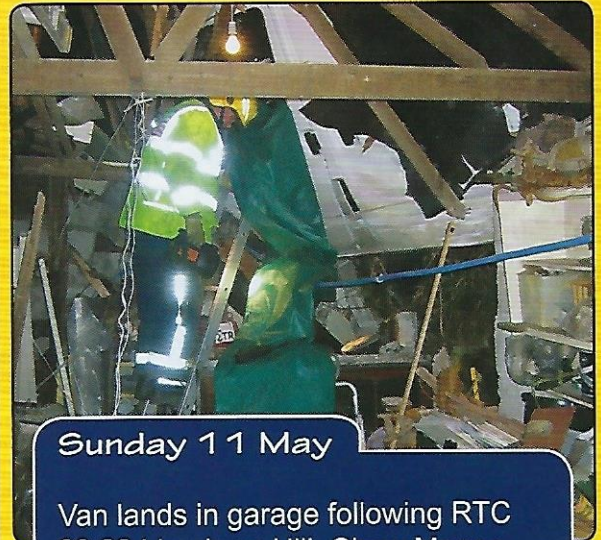
**Thursday 8 May**

Bobcat called to towpath fire  
11.06 River Avon Tow Path, Leigh Woods, Bristol



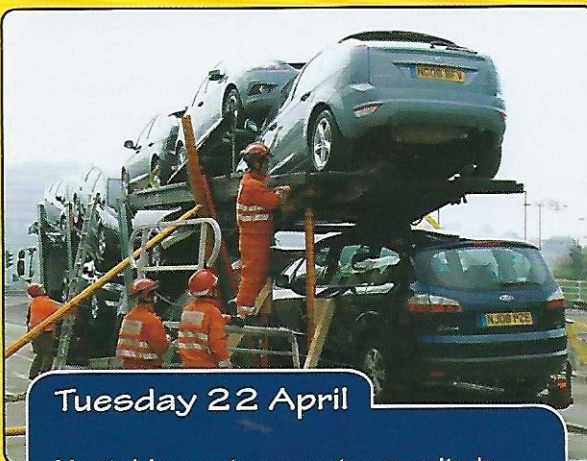
**Saturday 5 April**

Library office damaged by fire  
05.08 Central Library, College Green, Bristol



**Sunday 11 May**

Van lands in garage following RTC  
23.22 Limeburn Hill, Chew Magna



**Tuesday 22 April**

Unstable car transporter results in call up for our USAR Team  
08.48 Dual Carriageway, London Road East, Lambidge, Bath



**Wednesday 11 June**

Overloaded electrical socket spark house fire  
16.49 Hedwick Street, St George, Bristol

## Round-up



### Community Safety campaigns take to the streets

The second of the Community Safety Team's campaigns for this year is well underway, with arson and anti-social behaviour the focus.

Using a burnt out vehicle in five of Avon's hotspots for car fires, the Arson Task Force team has been out in the community urging people to help them find arsonists.

Shoppers at Symes Avenue in Hartcliffe chatted to the team about ways to reduce nuisance fires in their communities by reporting abandoned vehicles, naming known arsonists and removing piles of rubbish and grass cuttings from public places. The team have also been out and about in Southmead, Bath, Longwell Green and on the Bournville Estate in Weston-super-Mare.

Watch Manager Gary Thomson said: "The aim of the initiative is to get the community working with us to tackle arson and anti-social behaviour in their areas. The average cost of a car fire to the public is £4,000 so this is an important issue.

"So far the feedback has been very promising and we are hoping to see a reduction in the number of car and rubbish fires in the coming months."

Throughout the summer months the team will also be out and about in areas they have identified as hotspots for arson-related activity. They are also planning to get involved in a number of Environmental Action Days to clean up areas with large amounts of rubbish and abandoned vehicles, before they are targeted by arsonists.

This is the second campaign to have been run by the Community Safety Team so far this year.



With research showing 70 percent of all fires attended by AF&RS start in the kitchen, the first focused on cooking safety.

Crews from across the service carried out chip pan demonstrations and our advocates gave presentations to Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups and older people.

They also handed out tea-towels displaying the stop, drop and roll message, along with fridge magnets reminding people to take care when cooking.

Campaigns focusing on road, winter, firework and smoking safety are planned for the next six months.





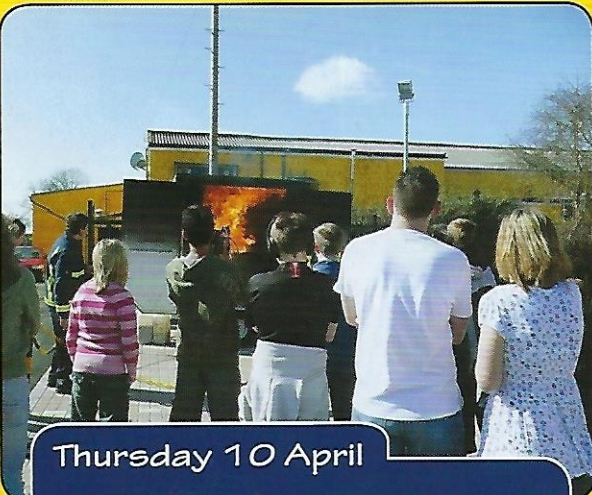
**Monday 10 March**

Barton Hill Week of Action, Barton Hill Settlement



**Saturday 10 May**

Chip pan demonstration in Weston-super-Mare High Street



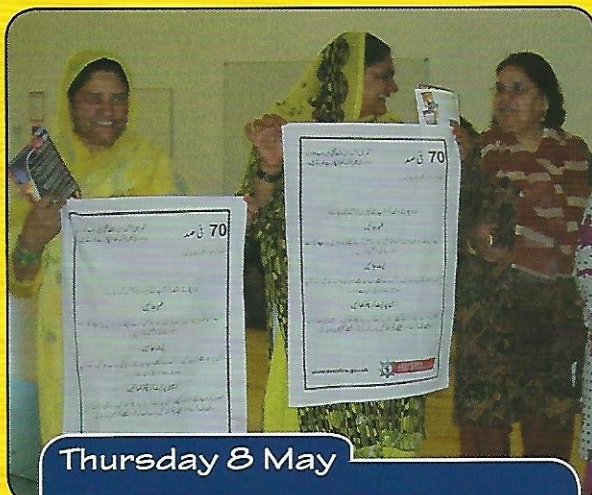
**Thursday 10 April**

Official opening of Knowle West Media Centre



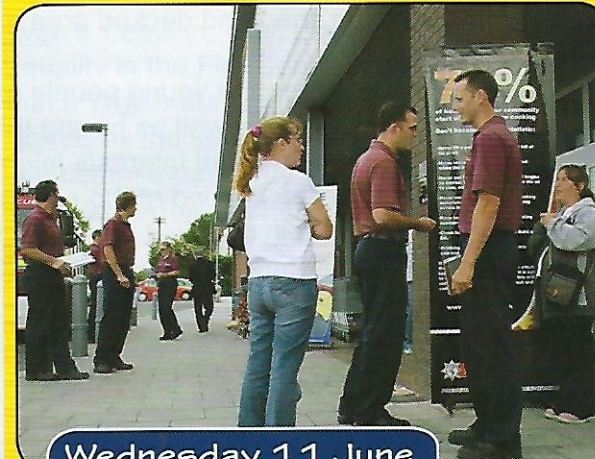
**Thursday 1 to Sunday 4 May**

RTC demonstration at Badminton Horse Trials



**Thursday 8 May**

Cooking safety talk with Asian community support group Dhek Bhal



**Wednesday 11 June**

Red Watch Southmead talk cooking safety with Aldi shoppers

## Our people



Crew Manager Nick Stratton (pictured left) will return to operational duty this summer after a 10 month secondment working with young people at the Prince's Trust in Bristol.

During his time with the charity Nick has been a team leader on a course which is run to improve employment and education opportunities for young people in the area.

The 12-week course works with 16 to 25 year olds from hardest to reach groups in an effort to encourage them into work or further education. Team members work towards a City and Guilds Level One qualification in Personal, Teamwork and Community Skills. But Nick explained it also improves confidence and skill levels.

He said: "When you see the journey the people on this course go on it really is amazing. You really see a physical change in them and they leave with a belief that they can now really get on in life."

At the start of the course Nick led the group of 14 on a team bonding exercise at an outdoor pursuits centre in Pembrokeshire.

Later on in the programme, as part of a community project, the team worked with the Young Mothers' Group Trust in Easton, which provides supported housing for new mums and their babies.

Nick said: "We ask them to find a deserving group they want to help. As one of the girls on the course had benefitted from the services of the Young Mothers' Group she suggested it as worthwhile project to support. Over two weeks the group redecorated the communal rooms, sprayed a mural on the outside wall, put in flower beds, cut back bushes and painted a shed and decked area."

Other aspects of the course see the young people given coaching in interview techniques and body language, as well as having the opportunity to think about what their educational or employment interests might be once they finish the course. The final challenge, the second of the community projects, saw Nick's team organise and participate in days out and activities for a group of adults with learning difficulties from The Park drop-in centre in Knowle.

With Nick's time with the Prince's Trust over, he is due to return to operational duties as a Crew Manager.

He said: "The fire service is about making a difference to people's lives and there are so many ways that we are able to do that. This experience has really opened my eyes and is one I have really enjoyed."



### Firefighters limber up for World Firefighter Games

Preparations are in full swing in Liverpool as Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service prepares to host this year's World Firefighter Games (WFFG).

Once again Avon will be well represented with a number of staff in training to take part in some of the 70 events taking place between 24 August and 2 September.

Among those planning to take part will be multi-eventer **Simon Hill** (pictured below right), from Fire Safety at Headquarters. Simon hopes to compete in the 800m and the 5km running race, as well as the cycling road race.

Despite breaking a toe, Simon has been in intensive training this summer taking on running events in Wales and the Cotswolds as well as the Three Peaks Challenge.



Simon is no stranger to the WFFG having competed when the games were last held in the UK four years ago.

**Ryan Crooks** from Patchway (04) Green Watch also hopes to fly the flag for Avon in the 60kg Powerlifting event.

Ryan recently set two British records at a British Drug Free Powerlifting Association event and is looking forward to competing in his first World Firefighter Games.

Another staff member due to hit the road during the games will be **Brian Penny**, Speedwell (11) White Watch. Although Brian (pictured above left) is recovering from an injury to his metatarsal he expects to be fit to enter the half marathon. He will be entering a number of 10km and half marathon races in preparation for the event.

If you are involved in the WFFG in any capacity we would be interested to hear from you.



### Leadership nod for Lorraine

Lorraine Abrahams, our Director of Service Improvement, has been recognised at a government awards ceremony for her contribution to addressing equality and diversity issues.

Lorraine was named a runner up in the Leadership category of the Fire and Rescue Services' Equality

and Diversity Awards 2008 following her work on the Women as Leaders Conference.

The conference took place in 2006 and sought to explore issues faced by women in a traditionally male-dominated working environment.

Avon's 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Equality in the Fire Service' conference, along with a Watch Managers equality training group started by the service, were also deemed worthy of a commendation by the judging panel and Fire Minister Parmjit Dhanda MP.

CFO/CE Kevin Pearson said: "I am extremely proud that the excellent work that has been taking place here in Avon has been recognised at the highest level.

"As a service we remain committed to a clear equality and diversity strategy which I believe has long term benefits for our staff and the public we serve."

## Our people



*Last year Watch Manager Haydn Beynon collected his 20 year service medal as recognition for his time as a retained duty firefighter at Weston-super-Mare (18). But when he is not attending calls with AF&RS, Haydn is the Deputy Fire Service Manager at Bristol International Airport Fire Service.*

Since joining the airport service in 1989 as a firefighter Haydn was able to climb the ranks and was promoted to Station Officer in 1995 and then to Deputy in 2000.

The busy airport service employs 52 people in a range of roles that extend far beyond just attending aircraft incidents, as the organisation is responsible for managing all safety activities at the airport.

In 2007 alone the airport service responded to 450 calls that included providing aircraft related responses, domestic fire cover at airport buildings and medical care for staff and airport users.

The service operates four Carmichael Cobra crash appliances and has a former AF&RS pump to provide domestic cover.

In his day to day role at the airport Haydn is responsible for running the operational response of the service, ensuring the training and development needs of staff are met, planning for emergencies and managing business risk.

Haydn also provides retained cover at Weston-super-Mare during weekends and evenings, and is among the 30 percent of airport firefighters who work as retained firefighters with Avon, Devon & Somerset or Gloucestershire FRSSs.

Haydn explained: "We have a great working relationship with AF&RS and my two jobs compliment each other well. While I still have that excitement factor of going on shouts when I'm on retained duty, my full-time job at the airport has allowed me the opportunity to get on and reach the position I have now. It's the best of both worlds and I really wouldn't change a thing."

### Weston-super-Mare (18) crew gains Skills for Life

Firefighters working on the Retained Duty System at Weston-super-Mare (18) are among the latest service staff to have gained Skills for Life qualifications.

The five firefighters have gained passes in Maths and English after three months of weekly sessions at the station run by tutors from Weston College.

As we highlighted in the Autumn/Winter 2007 Magazine, almost £65,000 was awarded to fund pilot

courses in Maths and English at retained stations in Avon and Gloucestershire following a bid by Firing Up – Learning for Retained Firefighters.

Initiated by the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU), the project, which includes representatives from both Avon and Gloucestershire fire and rescue services, successfully bid for funding from Learning Works for All (LWfA), a partnership managed by the South West Trades Union Congress (TUC).

Firefighter Nigel Pratt's commitment to the numeracy course was reflected in his final pass mark of almost 90 percent.

He said: "For me, it was an opportunity to refresh my skills and the course certainly helped as it covered aspects that I was a bit weak on.

"I completed a computer course a few years ago so already had a good understanding of IT, but Skills for Life has helped enhanced my learning in this area."



### Paul 'Sash' Windows draws curtains on Avon career

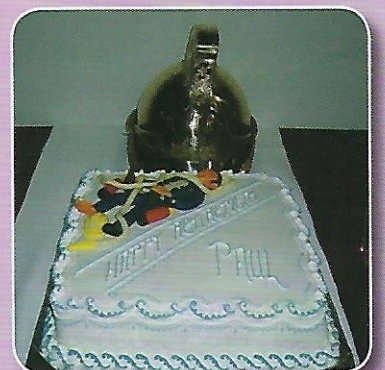
Around 150 people gathered at Bristol City Football Club's Premier Lounge to mark the retirement of Paul Windows, who has enjoyed a long career with Avon spanning 33 years.

Having served as a firefighter at five stations and on no less than eight different watches, as well as being a founding member of the Drill Squad, Paul is well-known throughout the service. This was reflected by the number that turned out to wish him, and his wife Elaine (pictured right), well.

Paul's Freddie Mercury impression and contribution to the Red Watch Weston-super-Mare pantomime, along with his four-hour world record for attendance at a dust cart/rubbish bin fire were fondly remembered in a speech by Weston-super-Mare Station Manager Steve Bagg.

Steve said: "Paul commanded many daring and testing incidents during his career. When detached to Bath he was called to a trapped cow that was in the middle of nowhere. He used to carry a mobile phone and was often ribbed about it, but on this occasion it came in handy as he was out of radio contact. Paul decided the only course of action was to call in a helicopter rescue..."

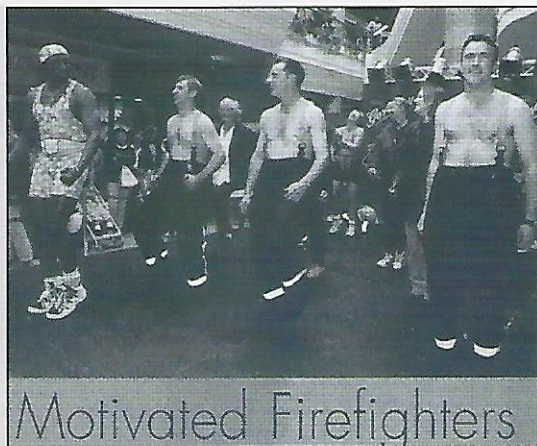
"Paul is a very friendly and sociable bloke who was the driving force behind many a happy Red Watch Temple trip to Torquay. He is always upbeat, will do anything for anybody, always sees good in everyone and is good at putting people at ease. He is very diplomatic and persuasive and was an excellent firefighter and officer."



# Looking back

The Looking Back feature from the last magazine had many of you digging out old Avon publications and memorabilia.

As it proved so popular, we decided to look a little closer at some of the articles of interest – maybe you might be able to spot a few familiar faces...



## Motivated Firefighters

Firefighters Steve Fisher, Iain Campbell and John Cook rose to the challenge when celebrity TV fitness guru Mr Motivator appeared at The Galleries shopping centre in Bristol.

Mr Motivator, real name Derrick Evans, visited the city as part of a nationwide promotion for McVie's Go Ahead! range of snacks.

Our team joined him and members of the public on stage for his workout and raised a valuable donation for the Benevolent Fund at the same time.

Brigade spokesman Ken Bennett said: "We were asked to join Mr Motivator because we are said to be the fittest of the emergency services. It was a bit of fun and the lads volunteered to take part in their own time."

Our picture shows the super-fit team demonstrating their Half Monty much to the delight of passing shoppers.

2

## A CLEAN SHAVE!

Helmets were a loose fit and all the locks were missing for a short while at B2 Radstock when the team took part in a sponsored head-shave for charity.

The stunt raised more than £1,800 for cancer patient Sub Officer Geoff Garrett, and the money was donated to the Fire Brigade Benevolent Fund.

3



## R.S.P.C.A. Awards

7

On the 8th June, 1983, R.S.P.C.A. Certificates of Merit were presented by the Lord Mayor of Bristol at the Council House, College Green.

Sub Officer John Sleight was awarded his Certificate of Merit for his part in rescuing a Gull trapped in a culvert taking the River Frome under the city centre.

A crew from C5 Bedminster comprising Sub Officer M. Palmer, Firemen S. Way, M. Ashley and J. Lovell for their efforts on the banks of the River Avon under Bedminster Bridge for rescuing two kittens.



## Clevedon Donates to CARE

5

ON Monday the 9th May, 1988 members of the C2 presented Clevedon CARE with a cheque for £400 – proceeds from the 1987 Clevedon Bed Race.

Clevedon CARE is a voluntary and charitable organisation giving practical help to the sick, lonely, handicapped or anyone young or old faced with a sudden crisis.

The picture shows Mr. Bernard Hawke receiving the cheque from Station Officer Peter Till along with the Rev. and Mrs. Smart and Mrs. Pat Eastbury from CARE and all C2 personnel, wives and friends who worked so hard to raise the money.



## SPORTS AND SOCIAL

### Football

In the last three months a lot has happened within the Brigade Football Club and the Management Committee has been extremely active. Peter Hamblin of A3 Avonmouth has taken over from Roger McKeown as Manager, and I should like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Club to thank Roger for all his endeavours both on and off the field and at the same time to wish Peter all the best for the future.

On the field, the Wednesday side continues to be in contention for honours in the league as well as being still in the GFA Wednesday Cup and at the time of writing in the League's Tom Jones Cup with a difficult quarter-final tie against Clifton Wednesday. The Wednesday side acts as a training and trialist side for all members of the Brigade who are interested in playing for the Brigade at Saturday or Representative level, and any members of the Brigade interested in playing should contact either Richard Gurney at A3 Avonmouth (Green Watch) or Mel Rogers at A1 Temple (Blue Watch).

In the Premier Division One of the Suburban League, the Brigade side has started performing on a consistent level after an extremely shaky start due in the main to the large number of players injured or unavailable through holidays or shifts.

Pete Hamblin took over control of the side in November and the side has played six fixtures under his control with four wins and two draws.



Avon's representative team



Outgoing Manager  
Roger McKeown



New Manager  
Peter Hamblin

6

New 'keeper Phil Judge (A3) has yet to concede a goal. Tony Clarke (C5) has commanded a regular place at full-back since completing his basic recruit's course and has proved an extremely capable hatchet man for the defence after being the 'Silver Axe' recruit. Graham Rudge (B6) has still not been allowed to hang up his boots although I've heard him say over the last three or four seasons that this will be his last season. Bob Amptstead (A3), Peter Hamblin (A3) and Micky Evans (A1) provide the competition for the back four although Micky has been hampered by knee and groin injuries.

In mid-field evergreen skipper Steve "the magic" Bull (a nickname acquired for his Paul Daniels-like prowess with the cards on away trips and in the bar) continues to provide the skilful and experienced blend of play to make the team tick. Craig Welsh (A3) and Richard Gurney (A3) complete the make-up of the mid-field.

Steve Mankowski (B4) provides the speedy service down the flank for Roger McKeown who has not lost the knack of finding the net and is again leading the goal-scoring list. Chris "Ginger" Jackson (A1) doubles between mid-field and attack.

The Saturday team play their home fixtures at our new ground in Napier Miles Road, Kingsweston.

## Mind the gap

NEWS

Two Bristol fire crews have received RSPCA awards for saving a cat after it fell 15 feet down into a narrow gap between two houses.

The drama in Clarendon Road, Bristol, began when a resident found Jules, the black and white cat, wedged in a six inch gap between two walls.

RSPCA Inspector Janet Harvey went to the scene and could not get the cat free. Southmead Fire Station attended and crews spent two hours trying various equipment to rescue the cat.

Crews changed shift and a new crew from Temple Back arrived, and by this time Jules was cold and weak and his cries were getting more faint.

After unsuccessful attempts to drill through a wall a final desperate attempt was made to pull the cat up with a "grasper", a long pole with a loop at the end.

The loop suddenly slipped around the cat's neck and he was quickly pulled from the gap to safety.

But the cat had lost consciousness and Inspector Harvey started to massage his heart and use the Fire Brigade's oxygen to revive him. Suddenly after several seconds the cat moved and came back to life and Inspector Harvey rushed the cat to a vet at the RSPCA Clinic at St Philips.

Jules was put in a heated incubator and miraculously made a full recovery in two days, after which he was reunited with his delighted owner.

Inspector Harvey who also received a Certificate of Commendation for her part in the rescue said: "This was a particularly tricky and frustrating operation and I simply could not have done it without the help of the fire officers."



Certificates were presented to the officers of White Watch A2 Southmead, Blue Watch A1 Temple, and Assistant Divisional Officer Martin Granville.

Back row: Members of Blue Watch A1 Temple and White Watch A2 Southmead.  
Front row (l-r): Officer Nigel Jagger, SA Officer Martin Granville, Jeanette Fox, Jagger, Chief Inspector Richard Harvey, and RSPCA national regional representative Jenny Wightman.

1

## PORTISHEAD PERAMBULATE

4

PORTISHEAD firefighters always seem to find painful ways of raising money for the Benevolent Fund and near the end of May three of them walked to Fire Brigade Headquarters wearing full fire kit and breathing apparatus.

Firemen David Sullivan, Neil Brown and John Pain, started at nine o'clock amid a blaze of publicity and set a cracking pace. I must admit I did not think they could keep going at such a rate wearing their fireboots but when I caught up with them some six miles later, they were still going strongly and no blisters.

At Ashton Court there was a short break for refreshment and cylinder changes to their breathing apparatus and then off again detouring slightly through Broadmead shopping centre to collect extra money.

The effort was a great success, all three completed the walk, their breathing apparatus performed faultlessly and several hundred pounds raised for the Fire Services National Benevolent Fund.



1: Avon Fire Brigade News – Summer 1999, 2: Avon Fire Brigade News – Winter 1998/9, 3: Avon Fire Brigade News – Winter 1999/00, 4: NOVA – Avon Fire Brigade Journal – Winter 1989, 5: NOVA – Winter 1988, 6: County of Avon Fire Brigade Magazine – April/May 1982, 7: County of Avon Fire Brigade Magazine – August 1983

## Girls in Gear

On Sunday 8 June, a number of staff made their way to Hullavington Airfield to help raise money for St Peter's Hospice in Bristol.

This was the second year for the hospice's driving challenge, which gives teams of women the chance to get behind the wheel of different vehicles such as JCBs, cranes, tractors and emergency appliances.

Due to the success of last year's event, when AF&RS took one appliance, this year we were asked to take two, so that everyone taking part would have the chance to drive a fire engine.

The fire appliances took centre stage, with the main runway assigned to AF&RS.

Phil James (Workshops), Steve Harris (Driver Training), Jan Shortland (Control), Andy Kirkby (Control and Yate 03 Retained Duty System) and Helen Shrimpton (Media & Communication) were on hand to help the teams fulfil their challenge - instructing them how to drive the course and ensuring their health and safety.

Not only were AF&RS staff involved in the organisation side of the event, there were also three teams made up of staff who took part:

Sheena Arshed (Performance Improvement Unit), Sue Cope (People Development), Sally Evans (Thornbury 02 Retained Duty System), Charlotte Jones (People Development), Katie Llewellyn (Risk Reduction and Ops Response), Jo Maggs (YDC), Liz Marchant (People Development), Joanna Warren (Service Improvement) and Jos Wood (Improvement Co-ordination Unit).

With each team member having to raise a minimum of £100, AF&RS staff not only helped by providing the vehicles, time and resources, but will have raised over £1,000 for St Peter's.

For more information on the fantastic work of this charity visit its website at [www.stpetershospice.org.uk](http://www.stpetershospice.org.uk)



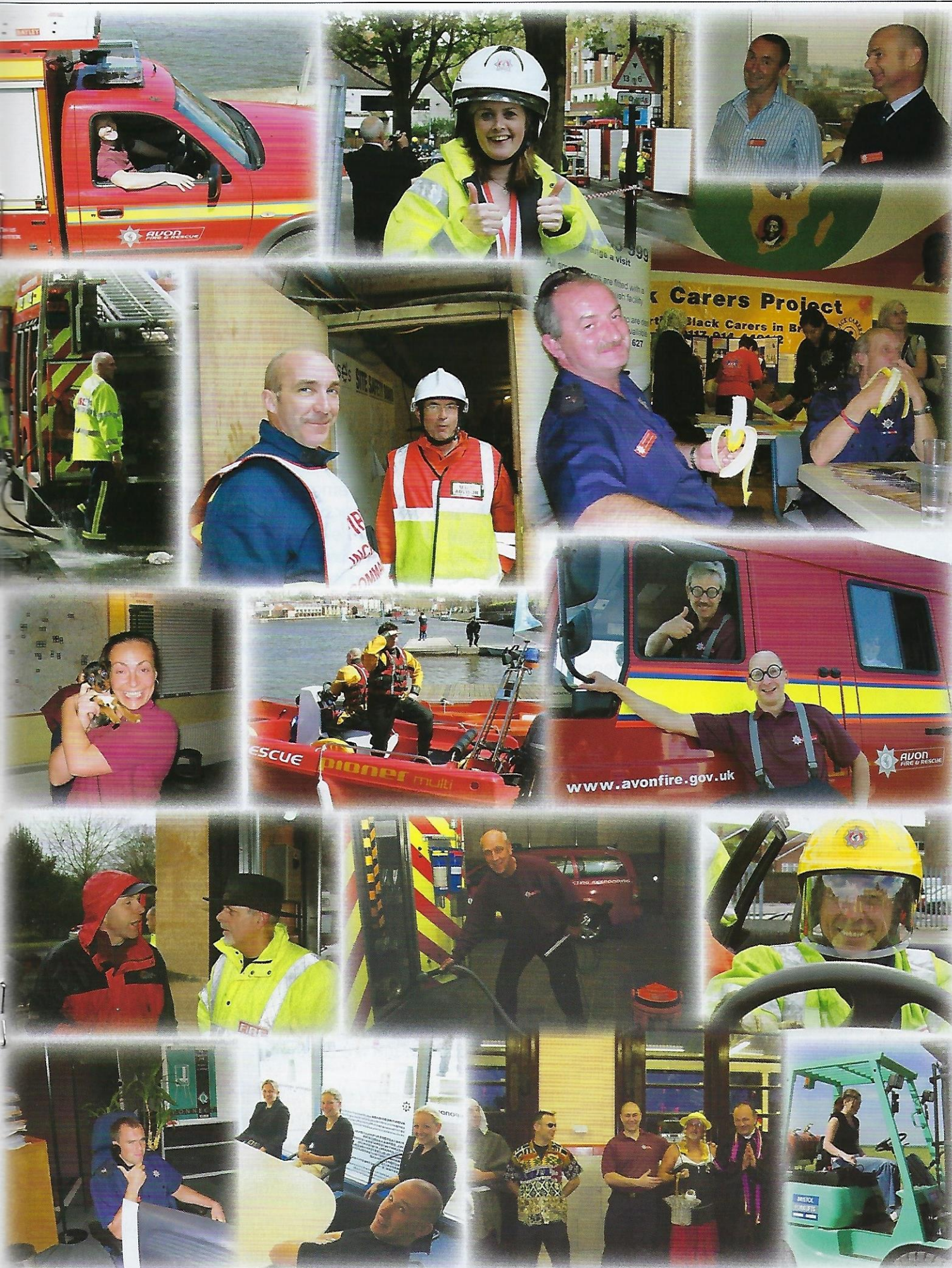
## Racing for life

Members of the Avon Women's Network (AWN) recently laced up their running (and walking) shoes to take part in the annual Race for Life event in Bristol in aid of Cancer Research UK.

The group joined thousands on Durdham Downs on a sunny Sunday for the five-kilometre (three mile) event.

All the women taking part in this year's event wore messages on their backs bearing loved-ones names and dedications to those who have had the disease.

[illegible]



# The Fire Fighters Charity



## The Fire Fighters Charity update

The charity's £1.8 million redevelopment of its Marine Court recuperation centre (pictured above) is expected to be completed this summer. The West Sussex-based centre will shortly boast a new indoor swimming pool and 11 new accommodation units.

Marine Court was the charity's first residential centre, purchased in 1964 to provide recuperation facilities for injured firefighters and their dependants.

The centre's revamp will mean that the charity can help even more fire service staff and their families.

Nigel Potts, the charity's Operations Director, said: "Over the past four decades the centre has helped thousands of people from the fire community. The redevelopment now enables us to assist 500 extra people a year, which is fabulous news for everybody associated with the project."

The Fire Fighters Charity is on hand to help operational and support staff during times of need, and assists thousands of people every year by providing treatment and support services.

The services provided by the charity cost over £9 million each year, and with no government funding, the charity is reliant on donations from the general public and fire and rescue service community.

Over the last 12 months, a record number of people (13,541) have been helped by The Fire Fighters Charity. In just four years the charity has increased the number of people it has helped by over 80%.

On average this amounts to one new person being helped every hour of every day.

The diverse range of services provided to fire service staff and their families, means the success of the charity's work will continue.

Currently the charity operates in three UK centres - Cumbria, Devon and West Sussex, offering varying combinations of therapy and recuperation services. The charity's new Beneficiary Support Service, due to be launched in July, will also offer local and remote assistance to people in need, nationwide.

Roy Lawrenson, Chief Executive of the charity, said: "Whilst we are delighted to be assisting more people in the fire services' family than ever before, we know that annually there are still three thousand more that could also be helped."

"By constantly improving the effectiveness, efficiency and diversity of our support services, we will continue to meet the challenge of helping a greater volume of people year-on-year. However none of this can be achieved without the continued support of the fire community."

A new therapy centre based in the East of England is just one of the additional developments currently being explored, which could significantly increase the overall capacity of the charity's services, helping many future generations from the fire community.

To find out more about the charity's services, visit [www.firefighterscharity.org.uk](http://www.firefighterscharity.org.uk)

### Exercise Black Hole

Crews from Red Watch at Temple (09) Fire Station and the service's Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Team were called to respond to an incident involving a fire and ceiling collapse 140 metres into an underground tunnel.

Fortunately the incident was actually an exercise set up by Wessex Water and AF&RS. The £9 million tunnel is currently under construction in Frogmore Street to alleviate sewer flooding in the centre of Bristol.

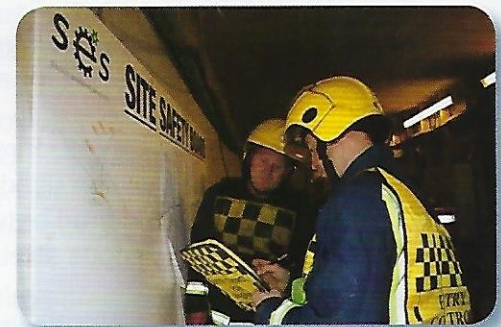
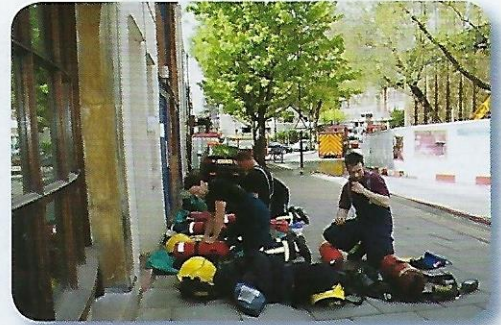
The exercise began with a 999 call reporting a fire in the tunnel and a number of 'casualties', trapped by falling masonry.

Crews wearing breathing apparatus quickly entered the tunnel and were able to rescue the driver of a digger, who had been working in the tunnel when the incident happened.

While inside, crews noticed a large amount of rubble and on receiving reports that two people were missing the USAR Team were called for.

The USAR Team worked alongside front line crews to continue the rescue. They quickly shored and propped up the tunnel before beginning the search for the 'casualties'.

On locating the missing, crews had to move all the masonry and then cut a large metal reinforced steel joist to free the 'casualties'.



### Exercise Dean Lane

Firefighters from Temple (09) Blue Watch kept up with the subterranean theme during an exercise held earlier this year.

Working alongside Wessex Water contractors, May Gurney, crews took part in the mock rescue of an injured sewer worker, stranded deep underground.

The scenario was an opportunity to make use of the Safety at Heights and Confined Spaces (SHACS) equipment and training recently delivered to firefighters in Avon.

Firefighters wearing breathing apparatus made their way more than 30 metres into the sewer at Dean Lane in Bedminster to reach the stricken 'casualty'. A paraguard stretcher was then lowered by colleagues so the dummy could be winched to safety.

Watch Manager Andy Gee said the exercise had been a valuable learning opportunity, giving his firefighters an insight into how they would be able to respond in a real emergency.





### Hovercraft ready for action

The service's new hovercraft was unveiled in March and is now 'on the run' and ready for action.

Based at Weston-super-Mare (18) Fire Station the vessel, named Firefly, will be used by crews to rescue people trapped in the mud between Brean Down and Sand Bay, a notorious stretch of coastline.

One of the main reasons for purchasing the hovercraft is to ensure the safety of fire crews, who may be called out to incidents involving casualties trapped in the mud.

Before the hovercraft was introduced crews responding to these types of incidents had to walk across the mud, potentially getting stuck themselves.

Pete Coombs, Watch Manager at Green Watch Weston-super-Mare, has been leading the project to bring a hovercraft to the service and has been busy training all of Station 18's watches to use it.

He said: "It's fantastic to finally see the hovercraft project come to fruition after many years in the planning stage.

"It is going to be a huge asset for the service as it can be used not only along the shoreline, but also to access areas that a standard appliance may find difficult to get to."

The service's CFO/CE, Kevin Pearson, described the hovercraft as a major asset to the service.

He added: "The hovercraft will increase the flexibility of our rescue capacity.

"Not only will it mean we can reach trapped casualties in just a few minutes, but it will also ensure the safety of our firefighters, who until now have had to walk out onto the mud and risk becoming stuck.

"Clearly with the flooding we saw last summer a hovercraft would have been a huge asset on inland waterways, but we also believe the hovercraft could be used to ferry equipment and staff to incidents such as animal rescues on soft ground or road traffic collisions that may involve a beach."

The hovercraft has been involved in extensive testing on Weston-super-Mare airfield as well as the beach.

It was unveiled to the local dignitaries and media in March (pictured top right) and featured on both BBC Points West and ITV West news programmes.

AF&RS's hovercraft will be used to complement the services already provided by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) and HM Coastguard.



### New Safety Boat to protect Bristol Harbourside

Built to the service's own specification, the new Pioneer Safety Boat is the first owned by Avon to be housed on a water mooring – the result of an arrangement with the Bristol Harbourmaster.

Special features of the vessel include a drop down loading ramp at the front, a 100hp Yamaha jet driven engine and a larger working area and increased lighting on deck. The jet engine and loading ramp enables the boat to operate in shallow water and allows crews to recover casualties safely onto the vessel.

When considering what the service needed from a new safety boat, Avon had a great deal of experience to draw upon from its 15 years of operating the vessels from Bath (12) and Bedminster (15) fire stations.

With a keen interest in sailing and a boat owner himself, Watch Manager Glyn Hughes from Red Watch Bedminster (pictured above) was given the task of researching and commissioning the craft.

WM Hughes said: "Having had a safety boat at Bedminster for many years, we are well aware

of what does and doesn't work - by introducing this boat we are ensuring we have the best equipment available to cope with a variety of incidents."

Made from polyethylene, more durable than the traditional fibreglass ribs owned by the service, the new boat is equipped with two floodlights attached to a frame on the stern and two detachable searchlights that double-up as hand-held torches.

The boat is moored at Bristol Harbour and went on the run in April after Bedminster's four watches were fully trained in using the vessel.

As well as improving their operational response to incidents on Bristol Harbour, Bedminster's crews have been working on promoting fire safety messages to boat owners.

Leaflets giving fire safety advice, including tips on fire extinguishers, isolating fuel supplies and devising escape routes were delivered to all houseboat owners on Bristol Harbour when the new mooring licenses were sent out. Red Watch Bedminster are also looking at delivering the houseboat equivalent of our Home Fire Safety Visits.

### Welfare Unit

In this age of eco awareness our appliance fleet has seen a bit of recycling itself.

Once a pumping appliance, one of our old Renault Midliner fire engines has been transformed and relaunched as the Welfare Unit.

The appliance now has four toilets and hot water facilities. The unit can be turned out at protracted incidents where emergency service workers have sometimes struggled to find facilities to use.

The vehicle has also been fitted with a disabled toilet, a wheelchair lift and a power outlet meaning it would also be suitable as a support vehicle at community events.





### Milestone for Avon Drill Squad

The Drill Squad was formed in 1987 when the then Chief Fire Officer Frank Wilton decided a group was needed to preside over events at the week-long Fire Exhibition, staged in Bristol that year.

Since its formation, the Drill Squad has gone on to represent the service at various events including Remembrance Day services, police memorials, local parades and inauguration ceremonies for the chairpersons of Avon's four unitary authorities.

Further afield, the squad is also jointly responsible for organising the Firefighters' Memorial Parade which takes place each year in London.

Gary Hawkes, the Drill Squad Chair, was elected as leader in 1999 following the retirement of George Raines.

Having been involved in the squad for almost 20 years, Gary said: "I'm very proud to say that we are representative of the whole service, with both wholtime and retained firefighters as well as support and control staff being members.

"A particular highlight for me is our involvement with the National Firefighters Memorial Charitable Trust, which stages the memorial parade in London. It is a high profile event for us and is a date firmly fixed in the Drill Squad diary."

Made up of serving and retired staff from both operational and support backgrounds, the squad shares duties with Avon and Somerset Constabulary's Mace Squad in guarding the Lord Mayor of Bristol and the mayors of Bath and Weston-super-Mare, escorting them at civic events around the area.

The group is also regularly accompanied by the drums and bugles of the Avon Core of Drums and has links with Avon Glen Pipe Band who supply pipers at Drill Squad events when needed.

When requested, the Drill Squad also acts as a Guard of Honour at weddings and funerals of current and former service staff, at 'sunset ceremonies' (retirements) and at medal presentations – such as at our own Annual Awards Ceremony.

The 22-strong group is in high demand and has a packed calendar each year and in addition to events in the UK, has also appeared at several ceremonies in Europe, including twice at the Menin Gate in Ypres, Belgium.



To crowds of over 2,000, the Drill Squad marched with Ypres Fire Brigade as they conducted their nightly sounding of the last post at the monument followed by a minute's silence.

The group also laid wreaths on behalf of both the service and local Royal British Legion branches at the monument, built as a mark of gratitude to the sacrifice made by the thousands of Allied troops who lost their lives during World War One.

More recently, the group took part in Bristol's Veteran's Day event at the end of June and also at the unveiling of a monument in the Fire Service Garden at the National Arboretum in Staffordshire.

The unveiling of the monument, which is dedicated to firefighters who have died during service, was attended by HRH The Princess Royal.



Drill Squad secretary Ian Morrissey, who joined the group nine years ago, was given the honour of parade commander, directing the march which comprised of drill squads from around the country.

Ian, founding member and treasurer Paul Windows and Drill Squad leader and Chair Gary Hawkes, have ensured the Drill Squad continues to be an important aspect of service life.



Ian said: "I can appreciate the need for modernisation, but I also think it is important to keep some of the traditional aspects of service life going. This is where we come in.

"I feel proud every time we put on our uniforms and parade – we often have people come up to us and say how impressed they were with our performances."

The Lord Mayor's Mansion House in Clifton proved a fitting location for the squad's anniversary celebrations.

With past and present members of the squad, their families, former Chief Fire Officers and councillors attending the event, the group's importance to wider service life is clear.

During the event, Gary, along with CFO/CE Kevin Pearson and Councillor Royston Griffey, the then Lord Mayor of Bristol, spoke about the work of the Drill Squad and praised its members for maintaining the group's traditions.



**Photograph, second from top, taken by West Midlands FRS**

## The way I see it

### Corporate wear / PPE

On a bitterly cold day in the winter, I am surrounded by my colleagues wearing coats, hats and scarves. This compares to the summer months when we are sweltering, with fans on full blast and everyone desperately trying to cool down.

While we can do nothing about the current climate of this country, I feel it would be helpful to change what we have to wear to work to make it more comfortable in times of extreme heat and cold.

I find the polyester mix of the corporate wear completely impractical, as it is flimsy, clings to the body with static and is highly unflattering.

**“Throughout the winter most of our staff are freezing, or feel the need to wear additional items of their own clothing to keep warm, meaning the idea of a corporate identity is thrown out of the window.**

**While I understand that the fabric used is cost-related, would it not be better to reduce the choice we are given on styles of trousers, skirts and shirts, and therefore spend more on the fabric? What’s wrong with good, old-fashioned cotton?”**

I believe I am right in thinking that there is to be a review of uniform across the whole fire and rescue service through the Integrated Clothing Project (ICP). The reasoning behind this is to create a national corporate identity. Is this really needed? To me it suggests a blatant waste of cash.

The ICP not only applies to support staff but also operational crews.

Why is there a need for our current Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to change? As far as I am concerned, if it ain't broke, why fix it?

Our current PPE is practical, protective and our staff are easily recognisable.

Surely it makes no difference to members of the public what we are wearing, as long as we can continue to prevent, protect and respond.

When the uniform for support staff was introduced, a board was set up with key members of staff across the service invited to give their views on the clothing.

If and when we look at the ICP, will it be possible to ensure that staff from a cross-section of ages across the service are invited to be part of the process, so we can ensure that if a national corporate identity for the fire and rescue service is established, we have some say in the comfort and practicability of it?

Do you have a burning issue that you would like to share with readers?

If you have a topic you would like to get off your chest, please write to us in no more than 350 words. All articles must be accompanied by a name, address and daytime telephone number. If you wish to remain anonymous, please state this at the end of your article.

Send your comments to:

The way I see it  
Media & Communication Team  
Avon Fire & Rescue Service HQ  
Temple Back  
Bristol  
BS1 6EU

Or email: [pressoffice@avonfire.gov.uk](mailto:pressoffice@avonfire.gov.uk)

Comments published in 'The way I see it' are from individuals and do not necessarily represent the views of AF&RS. The Editor reserves the right to edit any comments submitted.

### Football - Devon & Somerset FRS 3 Avon FRS 2

A defeat in the final of the South West Cup did not take the shine off an outstanding season for our football team.

The team's final fixture was against the newly formed Devon & Somerset FRS side. Despite dominating the early exchanges Avon fell behind to their opponent's only real chance of the half. However the side came back strongly, and some good build up play was finished off by winger, Poiner, who beat two defenders before firing home to make the scores 1-1 at half time.

Early on in the second half, Avon had the better of the chances. Their good play was rewarded in the 68th minute when Collis struck the ball sweetly into the net to make the score 2-1 in Avon's favour. But they soon found themselves under pressure from a determined D&S side.

Despite a smart save from Forrester, he could do nothing about the equaliser five minutes later. With the scores tied at full time the game went into extra time which saw Pugh-Jones leave the pitch with a broken foot and more good work from Forrester. Devon & Somerset continued to dominate play and their eventual winner was richly deserved.

Following the game, Player Manager Neil Punt said: "Even though we are massively disappointed with the result, the season has shown how much the team has improved over the last 12 months."



### Crown Services Volleyball Tournament

The talents of Avon's volleyballers were called upon by the national fire service team for the annual Crown Services Volleyball Tournament held at Her Majesty's Naval Base in Portsmouth in May.

Mel Creton (Blue Watch Bath), Jon Davies (Blue Watch Patchway) and Danny Munden (White Watch Speedwell) and the rest of their team took on opponents from the Police, Prison Service, Royal Navy, Army and RAF.

Having only met for the first time the night before, the team put in some strong performances to finish in fourth place.

Danny, who captained the team, said: "This was a great team effort with some star performances from all, showing great spirit and promise for the future."

"The ladies team came second, losing to the police in a very close final and the mixed team won, having defended their title – from these strong results it is clear that nationally, fire service volleyball is alive and well. My thanks go to the Chief for his support and also to the Sports and Social Club for their assistance."





## It's Cake Time!

In May Creative Services held Cake Time in aid of the charity Shelter. Here we publish some of the tasty treats baked for the event.

### Tray bake

What we liked about this cake is its versatility as you can turn it into a variety of flavours with just a change of a few ingredients.

#### For the basic sponge mixture

##### Ingredients

6 oz / 175g soft margarine  
8 oz / 225g self-raising flour  
1 ½ level tsp baking powder  
6 oz / 175g caster sugar  
3 eggs  
3 tablespoons of milk

Heat the oven to 350°C, gas mark 4.

Grease and line a 'roasting' tin about 12 x 9 inches (30 x 22.5cm).

Put the margarine, flour, baking powder, sugar, eggs and milk together in a large bowl and beat for about two minutes until well blended.

Turn the mixture into the tin and smooth the top.

Bake in the oven for about 35 to 40 minutes until the cake has shrunk from the sides of the tin and springs back when pressed in the centre.

Leave to cool in the tin. Decorate and ice as required.

#### Chocolate version

To start, blend three level tablespoons of cocoa with three tablespoons of hot water in the mixing bowl.

Then add the remaining ingredients as above, leaving out the milk and beat until blended. If the mixture is a little stiff add half the milk. Follow the above steps to finish.

For chocolate icing, melt 3 oz / 75g of butter or margarine in a small saucepan and then stir in 2oz / 50g of sieved cocoa and cook over a gentle heat for one minute.

Remove from the heat and stir in 8 oz / 225g sieved icing sugar and two tablespoons milk. Beat well until the icing has thickened and then spread over the cake. Leave to set.



**Coconut version**

Add 4 oz / 110g coconut to the basic sponge mixture.

When the sponge is cooked, allow to cool before cutting the sponge into two pieces to form a top and bottom. Sandwich the two pieces together with jam (any flavour you fancy - how about lemon curd, apricot or raspberry?). Then spread jam over the top of the sponge and sprinkle over some lightly toasted coconut.

**Cranberry Flapjacks**

Makes 12 generous slices

**Ingredients**

8oz butter or margarine  
4oz Demerara sugar  
4 tablespoons golden syrup  
10oz porridge oats  
2oz plain flour  
Couple of handfuls of dried cranberries

Preheat oven to 180°C

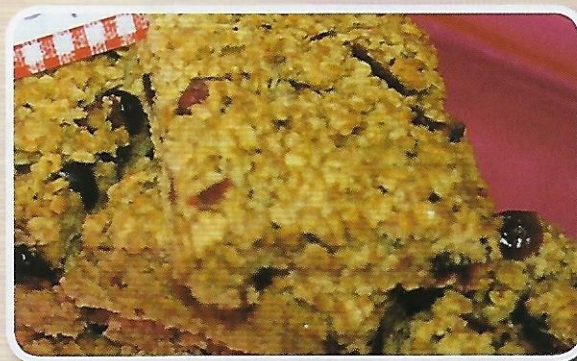
Mix the flour, cranberries and porridge oats in a bowl.

Melt the butter, sugar and syrup in a saucepan over a low heat, stirring until the sugar has dissolved. Remove from heat and add the flour, oats and fruit mix.

Press into a well greased shallow tin (approx 13in x 7in) and bake for 15 to 20 minutes until golden brown.

Mark into slices and leave to cool before removing from tin and cutting up.

Like the tray bake, this flapjack can easily be made into different flavours. Try adding raisins, dried cherries or even chocolate chips!



**I have a number of contacts that I regularly email, can I add them to Outlook in some way so that I don't have to type their address in each time?**

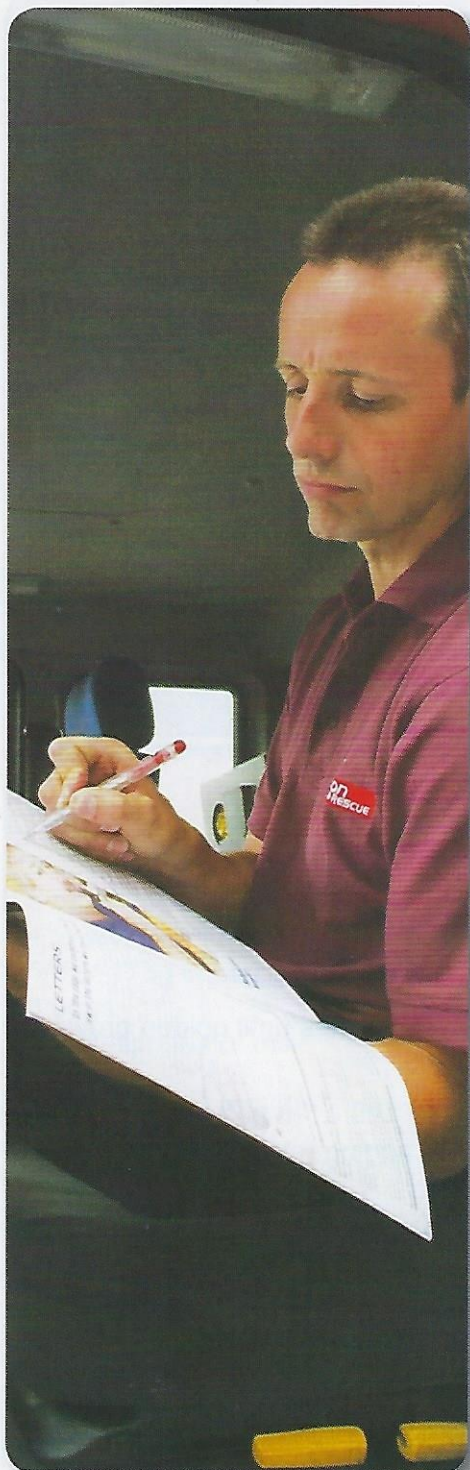
Yes you can! When you create a new email and hit the 'To...' button you automatically see the internal staff 'Global Address List'. If you click on the drop down arrow to the right of this you will see a number of options. The last option is 'Contacts'. When you follow the below steps to add your contacts to the Outlook Address Book you will be able to find the person you have entered here.



Therefore...click on 'Contacts' on the left hand side of your email screen, underneath 'Outlook Today' and 'Calendar'.

As soon as you click on 'Contacts' you'll notice that the top tool bar will have changed slightly. To add a new contact click on the first icon, which has a picture of a grey and white box and 'New' written on it.

You'll now have an 'untitled contact' box to fill in - just add the details and click 'Save and Close'. You'll now see your contact saved in the main contacts folder and will be able to find them when you click 'To' and choose the 'Contacts' address book in a new email.



## Sudoku grid

		9	3		8			
1				2		8		
			4	6				3
8	5				7			4
		3		5		2		
9			2				6	5
3				9	6			
		1		4				8
			7		2	5		

## Dingbats - Movie titles

Can you identify the titles of the films from the clues below?

1.

H\$A\$N\$D

2.

IXWEE

3.

MINUGONETE

4.

OT2021

5.

♥ sight  
sight  
sight

6.

SUCCESS  
GALAHAD

## Answers:

### Dingbats - Movie titles

(1) Back To The Future, (2) Nine And A Half Weeks, (3) Gone In 60 Seconds, (4) Back To The Future, (5) Love At First Sight, (6) Overnight Success

### Pet detective answers

1. Kevin Read (Spunky), 2. Lee Rogers (Banksy), 3. Andy Beavis (Thunder and Lightning), 4. Iain Campbell (Henry), 5. Sam Gayne (Max), 6. Paul Saunders (Wiffy), 7. Glandell Thompson (Bubba), 8. Damian Griffiths (Poppy and Daisy).

## Sudoku

4	8	6	7	1	2	5	3	9
7	9	1	5	4	3	6	2	8
3	2	5	8	9	6	7	4	1
9	1	7	2	8	4	3	6	5
6	4	3	1	5	9	2	8	7
8	5	2	6	3	7	1	9	4
2	7	8	4	6	1	9	5	3
1	3	4	9	2	5	8	7	6
5	6	9	3	7	8	4	1	2

**We've had mail! Former staff members have been in touch to let us know what they've been up to since leaving the service - and for two this has meant a move to sunnier climes!**

It's great to receive the brigade magazine, just to know what's going on.

I now live in Spain, mid way between Valencia and Alicante, and a great part of my time is taken up playing bowls.

I regularly see Brian Pocock, who lives south of Alicante. I am a member of the Spanish international bowls team, and January this year represented Spain at the World Bowls Championship in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Anyone who wishes to catch up on old times can contact me at [casalimon2002@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:casalimon2002@yahoo.co.uk)

**Clive English**  
Ex Blue Watch Bridewell and Temple

I was delighted to receive the Spring edition of the Magazine.

It was with interest that reading through the magazine many names from the past were mentioned, especially from the former magazines section.

It has improved from the days when I was responsible for most of the photographs which appeared in the pre-Avon magazines - the ones published in the Spring edition I remember well.

**Brian Pocock**  
Ex brigade photographer

Following a request to our former staff for stories from their time at Avon and news about what they have been getting up to since leaving the service, we received this from **Tony Stonehouse**, a firefighter from 1963 to 1996.

### Something beautiful

"I remember sitting in the cab waiting for the rest of the crew to return from a 'False alarm, good intent'. It was raining, and the appliance I was sitting in had stroboscopic blue flashing lights. Because they are split second flashes, the raindrops seemed to hang in the sky like sapphires."

### Something funny

"Waiting outside Bristol Children's Hospital at the top of St Michael's Hill, I became aware of a strange dragging sound. On my right was a rather tipsy gentleman pulling up the hill one of those huge benches from a park. I wonder if he ever got it home..."

"When I was in the old station 'Bridewell', there was one large dormitory with two large extractor fans. Anyway, there was a pillow fight in progress when one of the pillows burst! Feathers everywhere, we had to get rid of them before the duty officer walked in. So out through the fan they went - it was raining and the police officers' own cars were parked outside. Need I say more?!"

"Another time, about 1am, I heard a 'whacking' sound and saw a tipsy gentleman had broken the window of a sports shop opposite. He picked out a golf club and a large box of golf balls and was hitting them way up the road towards the centre!"

"I won't carry on - I think I could write a book on incidents like these!"

And finally...

## Pet detective

They say pets often look like their owners, so in this Magazine we've come up with a new game to while away a few minutes.

All you have to do is look at the pictures of this furry, whiskered, scaly and scary bunch and work out which pet belongs to which firefighter.

There's no prizes for guessing the right combination, which can be found at the bottom of page 26.

If your Watch has some interesting characters and pets contact the Media & Communication Team on extension 217 and we'll feature you next time around.



**Editor:** Louise Hart

**Regular contributors:** James Bladon, Steph Mounsey, Helen Shrimpton

**Guest contributors:** Danny Munden, Neil Punt, Blue Watch Temple

**Design and layout:** Sharon Brewer

**Thank you:** To all our contributing writers, as well as everyone who supplied pictures, letters and ideas

Views expressed in opinion pieces and articles are those of the individual, and do not necessarily reflect those of the publishers or AF&RS.

All content is subject to copyright and no part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, without prior consent of AF&RS Media & Communication Team. Images are the copyright of AF&RS or the relevant supplier.

Written, designed and published by Creative Services, HQ, Temple Back, Bristol BS1 6EU. Tel: 0117 926 2061 extension 217 or email [pressoffice@avonfire.gov.uk](mailto:pressoffice@avonfire.gov.uk)

## You are a winner!

Congratulations to Southmead (06) Station Manager Rob Leppier who was the winner of our spring magazine competition. Rob wins a copy of The Invitation Book which contains over £13,000 worth of savings and discounts at attractions, restaurants and shops in Bristol, Bath, Weston-super-Mare and the surrounding areas.

For more information on the Invitation Book, log onto [www.invitationbook.co.uk](http://www.invitationbook.co.uk). Enter the word FIRE when you purchase a copy of the book online and Invitation will donate £4 from each sale split between The Fire Fighters Charity and Gambia and Avon Fire Services in Partnership (GAFSIP).